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Providing Experiences for Student Themes and One Hundred Topics for Composition

By ROBERT LOWELL STEVENS

Department of English, University of Illinois

LOOK at your watch. Note the second hand. Follow instructions carefully; you get only one chance. Ready? All right, without looking around you, name ten things, just anything, in the *next* 10 seconds. Go!

. . . Now. The ten seconds are up. Why did you fail (I'd bet even money that unless you named the parts of your watch you did fail)? Surely, out of the world of things you can name ten. Then why the sudden inability to think? There are chairs, books, dogs, ships, mothers-in-law, bananas, oceans, raindrops, cities, atoms, ideas, dictators, needles, stars, leaves, school teachers, sponges, and perhaps some billions of other things in the world. But you couldn't think of ten!

Now, when you go to class next time take your watch with you. Tell your students to get out their pencil and paper. Inform them that in the next forty minutes they are to write an impromptu theme on, let us say, *My Greatest Ambition*.

The analogy need be carried no further. You and the student were without resource material—without an initial experience to awaken memories of things or events. And without the initial experience you encountered a poverty of ideas.

Perhaps in no phase of a student's school life is a response more imperiously demanded than in the writing of themes. And in no phase of the student's school life is the answer to the question "response to what?" more apt to be vague.

As the editor of John Dewey's *Interest and Effort in Education* stated in the preface to that book, "A child's character, knowledge, and skill are not reconstructed by sitting in a room where events happen. Events must *happen to him*. Events must *happen to him*, in a way to bring a full and interested response."

This paper is concerned with methods for allowing the student to extend, enrich, and deepen his experience, that is, with providing experiences for the student to have; and with the relating of these experiences to the writing of themes which are assigned for two purposes:

1. to give the student practice in the writing skill,
2. to give the student practice in identifying, organizing, and interpreting his recollections of past experiences.

Gates has referred to the importance of augmenting experience and has given some suggestions for doing it. One of the first ways, he states, "should be to exploit the local environment to the fullest possible extent."

Nature study, general science, biology, and physical science are usually too bookish as they are now taught. The woods, streams, rocks, farm lands, and natural phenomena of all kinds are laboratories that are as essential as the formal laboratory and classroom. The local environment is also an important means of understanding historical events and trends. . . . The school journey or the excursion is one of the most useful learning activities. Other means of providing concrete experience are found in projects, or "constructive activities," which are attempts to create realistic representations of things read about, and to provide an experimental basis for later learning situations. Assembling classroom or school museums, using public museums, and arranging exhibits in connection with instructional units provide additional opportunities for extending experience.¹

Another way is to utilize visual aids, which include "pictures, drawings, photographs, prints, stereographs, lantern slides, animated drawings, silent and sound motion pictures, maps, globes, charts, graphs, diagrams, and models."²

Still another method is to use recorded music and the various types of literature. These aids cause "places, people, events, and

¹ Arthur I. Gates, Arthur T. Jersild, T. R. McConnell, Robert C. Challman, *Educational Psychology*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948, pp. 428-9.

² *Ibid.*

processes"³ to seem more real, and as a consequence make thinking more effective, reduce verbalism, increase vocabulary, make language more meaningful⁴, and help unlock, by allusion, the "shadowy recollections" of past experience, necessary for creative thought and expression.

But how specifically is this process carried out in the assignment of theme topics? Let us look at a few examples.

A conventional topic assigned for enlargement into a theme might be "My First Summer Vacation from High School (or College)." In developing such a topic the student must depend entirely upon recollection. There are no present experiences provided for him to connect with the past. Although acceptable compositions may arise from such topics, it is common knowledge that they often cause "mental catalepsy" in the student because they offer no suggestions for writing.

However, a topic similar to the above may be presented in a different way. Suppose a student is given a picture of a typical college boy loading his baggage into his dad's car. Suppose it shows his tennis shoes, trumpet, school flags, golf clubs, girls' pictures, radio, loud sweaters, crazy hats, books, pet canary, electric fan, fraternity paddle, alarm clock with the broken face, countless suitcases—all being packed haphazardly into the rear of the car while his dad looks on in amazement. Will not the situation itself, some aspect of the situation, or some of the objects in the picture be likely to awaken a train of memories in the student's mind? Will not the picture provide an experience to which he can react?

Another conventional topic might be "The Most Memorable Character I Ever Knew." Here again no point of departure is afforded the student. However, the following paragraph from the opening lines of Conrad's *Lord Jim* might well stir the student's memory.

He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull. His voice was deep, loud, and his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it. It seemed a necessity, and it was directed apparently as much to himself as at anybody else. He was spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat, and in the various Eastern ports where he got his living as ship-chandler's water-clerk he was very popular.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

⁴ *Ibid.*

The object in the above quotation is to give the student an experience to which he can react. An initial reaction to this topic might take several forms, perhaps as follows:

1. Why, I knew a guy like that once. He was a truck driver who. . . .
2. Ha! Bill sure isn't that way. Bill is as opposite to that description as. . . .
3. The thing which struck me most about Harold was his *deep, loud voice*. . . .
4. Tom was short, just over five feet, but powerful. . . .
5. Johnny makes me think of a retreating mouse, rather than a charging bull. . . .
6. I first met Wang Lo at a *Western* port, San Francisco. . . .
7. Popularity is a trait cherished by the "haves" and envied by the "have-nots."

The above topic is a good one because it broadens the student's horizon, calls up half-forgotten incidents and faces, strengthens half-remembered thoughts, and helps open the mind to its own scrutiny.

It will be noted that as in Number 7, sometimes the reaction is not precisely that which is desired by the teacher. If the teacher must have a character sketch, let her narrow the topic. However, the broader topic, in that it allows the student to draw more freely upon his past experiences, probably will result in a better composition.

But there are other topic possibilities. Few people can sit unmoved through a playing of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. It is an exciting experience to sit, pencil in hand, listening to great music, occasionally writing notes concerning thoughts that the music has called up from somewhere in one's mind. Music stimulates thought. Because it does so, music can provide topics for composition. Naturally, from a topic of this type will come subjects as varied as the people in the class. But each student will be writing about something that he knows—his own experience.

Personal observation, also, can serve as a theme topic. Assignment: "Go to the corner magazine stand which is run by a blind woman. Buy something. Observe. Think. Write a theme." Again it may be unwise to say, "Write about the blind woman." Perhaps the student will want to write about Milton's "On His Blindness" or seeing-eye dogs.

As a consequence of this method of assigning theme topics which provide new experiences for the student and encourage his

recalling of old experiences, thinking can be made more effective, verbalism reduced, and better, more meaningful themes result.

In the May 1947, *Illinois English Bulletin*, Marjorie E. Fox listed a thousand topics for composition. The following list uses her classifications and may be considered as a supplement. The supplementary items are the kinds of topics that have been described in this article. Students assigned one of these items should be asked to go to the source for the complete topic. Where teachers do not have access to large libraries, these items will have to serve as models for topics using sources available to the students. This list is in no sense exhaustive. Where passages in books are cited it is quite possible that a hundred other passages in the same books might be as effective. These topics should serve mainly as examples of the types of topics which are usable for student themes.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

1. The two-page color picture entitled "Birds and beasts look high and low for winter warmth." *Life*, November 29, 1948, pp. 78-9.
2. "The small boy and the Negro waved to one another until the train was almost out of sight. . . ." William Saroyan, *The Human Comedy*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1943, Chapter One.
3. The description of the death of Gandhi. Vincent Sheean, *Lead Kindly Light*. New York: Random House, 1949, beginning at p. 202 with the third complete paragraph and continuing to the end of the chapter.
4. See No. 3, PERSONAL REACTIONS.
5. See No. 4, FAMILIAR ESSAY.

PERSONAL REACTIONS

1. Any of the pictures showing children's reactions to Santa. *Life*, December 20, 1948, p. 64.
2. Picture of a small child who is not at all happy. *U. S. Camera*, February, 1949, p. 3.
3. An essay on tact directed to the officers of the United States Navy. Arthur A. Ageton, *The Naval Officer's Guide*. New York: Whittlesey House, 1943, p. 242.
4. "All of us, who can, talk—even when we don't listen. And most of us talk too much. The impulse to talk is what strong men surrender to when they no longer have the strength to remain silent. . . ." *The Saturday Review of Literature*, February 19, 1949, p. 24, third column, first paragraph.
5. "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. . . ." Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1929, p. 196, third complete paragraph.

6. "Your conscience is a nuisance." Rudyard Kipling quoting Mark Twain in *A Kipling Pageant*. Garden City: Halcyon House, 1942, p. 406, second complete paragraph.
7. A picture of the Pentagon Building from the air. *Time*, June 6, 1949, p. 21.
8. Picture of an ultra-modern living room. *Today's Woman*, November, 1947, p. 68.

FAMILIAR ESSAY

1. Cartoon depicting a father who is the victim of a spendthrift family. *Saturday Evening Post*, December 4, 1948, p. 44.
2. "Widespread prejudice against the two-dollar bill is one of America's most absurd and costly superstitions." *Collier's*, August 20, 1949, p. 6, first paragraph.
3. See No. 9, COMPARISON AND CONTRAST.
4. See No. 1, PERSONAL REACTIONS.
5. See No. 3, PERSONAL REACTIONS.

CHARACTER SKETCH (TYPES)

1. "The policemen were all big beefy men, with hearty drawling voices, red countrified faces. . . ." Thomas Wolfe, *Of Time and the River*. New York: Scribners, 1944, p. 369, fourth complete paragraph to p. 370, end of first paragraph.
2. The picture "Fortune Seller," by Karl Zerbe. A suitable reproduction of this picture may be found in *Contemporary American Painting*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949, Plate 25.
3. Picture of a checker game in a country store. *Coronet*, June, 1947, p. 143.

CHARACTER SKETCH (INDIVIDUALS)

1. "The girl stooped as she came out of the cave mouth carrying the big iron cooking platter and Robert Jordan saw her face turned at an angle and at the same time saw the strange thing about her. . . ." Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. New York: Scribners, 1943, p. 22, fourth complete paragraph.
2. Picture entitled "Truman's Teachers." *Life*, December 13, 1948, p. 123.
3. The article "Peter's X-Ray Eyes: A South African Youth Uncannily Locates Gold and Water Underground," by Robert Deindorfer. *Life*, April 25, 1949, p. 2.
4. "Paul Makushak had succeeded, as far as police could learn, in his desire to be alone." The article about Paul Makushak's ten years in a "cramped cubbyhole." *Time*, May 9, 1949, p. 72.
5. Several pictures of conductor Josef Krips showing his reaction to the music he directs. *Life*, January 31, 1949, pp. 8-9.
6. "The blind man strode northward along the Lake Shore Drive sidewalk. . . ." The story "Compensation." *Tempo*, April, 1949, p. 18.

DESCRIPTION

1. "All round the horizon the sea and sky played together. . . ." Isak Dineson, "The Fish," *Winter's Tales*. New York: Random House, 1942, p. 238, beginning with the fifteenth line and continuing to the end of the paragraph.
2. "It was achingly hot in the side streets leading from the piers, and appallingly dirty. . . ." Sinclair Lewis, *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929, Chapter Sixteen, from the beginning of twenty-fifth paragraph to the end of the twenty-sixth paragraph.
3. "They were volunteers, they were farmers mostly, they were incredibly young, they were Missourians, and frontiersmen—close kin to the Big Bear of Arkansas. All good armies grouch. . . ." Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision—1846*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943, section beginning on p. 251 and particularly the second complete paragraph, p. 252.
4. "The room was a space just 30 inches wide, five feet long and nine feet high. The wall the police broke through was an amateur's job of lath and inch-thick cement." See No. 4, CHARACTER SKETCH—INDIVIDUALS, p. 75, first paragraph.
5. See No. 5, THE NEWS—NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL.
6. See No. 2, CHARACTER SKETCH (TYPES).
7. See No. 3, CHARACTER SKETCH (TYPES).
8. See No. 1, PERSONAL REMINISCENCES.

PROCESSES

1. A plate illustrating the four-color printing process. "Photo-Engraving," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1946 ed., vol. 17, Plate III, opposite p. 794.
2. Student's observation of the method of registration at the University of Illinois (or any other university).
3. Student's observation of printing at a newspaper plant.
4. Student's observation of a policeman directing traffic.
5. See No. 4, THE NEWS—NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL.
6. See No. 3, FARMING.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

1. Schubert, "Ave Maria" (Andre Kostelanetz) and Bach-Gounod, "Ave Maria" (Andre Kostelanetz), Columbia Masterworks 7416-M (XCO 33799). Two sides of the same record.
2. Carl Sandburg's "Fog" and Althea Drake's "Fog."
3. "Paganini and Liszt," Hendrik Willem van Loon, *The Story of the Arts*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1937, pp. 585-95.
4. The poem "Son" by Robert Service, *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*. New York: Barse and Hopkins, 1916, p. 130, and the article "So Long, Son," by Howard Vincent O'Brien, *Beyond the Seas*, Collette, Cross, Stauffer

5. Two pictures, "Main Street, U. S. A.," and "Nagasaki Wreckage," *The NEA Journal*, October, 1948, pp. 440-1.
6. Two pictures of the same area, one made by the Mount Wilson telescope and the other by the big Mount Palomar telescope. *Collier's*, May 7, 1949, p. 21.
7. "... the smartest monkeys learned more rapidly than the dullest children." The article "Learning to Think," *Newsweek*, August 22, 1949, p. 51.
8. A color photograph of a mountain, and two paintings of the same scene, one by Winston Churchill and one by Cezanne. *Life*, February 7, 1949, p. 66.
9. See No. 1, PERSONAL REMINISCENCES.
10. See No. 3, ARGUMENTATIVE EXPOSITION.

PERSUASIVE EXPOSITION

1. "... You can say what you like, but Italians are tricky and Okies are shiftless and Negroes are lazy and Jews are too smart and a world-government is against human nature and against all the principles laid down by George Washington. . . ." Sinclair Lewis, *Kingsblood Royal*. New York: Random House, 1947, pp. 313-314, all of section fifty.
2. "Whence our feverish search for the easy way; our obsession with the opiate dream? . . . Better marriage relations in this country await an extensive revaluation of our attitude towards life and living. . . ." David L. Cohn, "Moonlight and Poison Ivy," *The Atlantic*, January, 1949, p. 38, last two paragraphs.
3. Picture showing a Negro being beaten by a mob. "Race Riot in St. Louis," *Time*, July 4, 1949, p. 15.
4. Picture of a forest fire entitled, "It's Your Future That's Burning." *Saturday Evening Post*, August 27, 1949, p. 46.
5. Picture showing a little boy whose eyes are "lidless, from a blast." *Saturday Evening Post*, August 27, 1949, p. 17.
6. See No. 3, ARGUMENTATIVE EXPOSITION.
7. See No. 5, THE NEWS—NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL.
8. See No. 4, THE CAMPUS.

ARGUMENTATIVE EXPOSITION

1. Picture showing a football team taking advantage of the unlimited substitution rule. *Life*, December 20, 1948, p. 45, upper right-hand corner.
2. Cartoon showing Russia's desire for security. "Soviet Foreign Policy, as interpreted in 1948 by Lewis of the *Milwaukee Journal*." *Encyclopaedia Book of the Year—1949*, p. 714.
3. "Those who had been campaigning for a National Health Service in Britain confidently expected that it would begin with a period of administrative chaos. . . ." "Britain's Health Service," by Stephen Taylor. *The New Republic*, February 28, 1949, p. 12.
4. "... we fail to live up to our position of strongest nation on earth because we're afraid." A cartoon and comment upon it. *Quick*, August 15, 1949, p. 10.

SPORTS

1. A picture of a referee apparently doing some blocking in a football game. *Life*, November 29, 1948, p. 106, the picture in the Graflex ad.
2. The record of Joe Louis as given in the current *Information Please Almanac*.
3. The article entitled "World Shaker." It concerns the remarkable record of the swimmer Hironoshin Furuhashi. *Time*, August 29, 1949, p. 38.

THE NEWS—NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

1. A diagram of the east and west wings of the White House, labeled. *Life*, December 13, 1948, p. 36.
2. Article about Vittorio Vidali. "Wherever he went, murder followed." *Time*, September 6, 1948, p. 22.
3. Robert Murl Daniels killed three people simply because he didn't have any rope to tie them up. Pictures of him winking for the newsreel camera. *Life*, August 16, 1948, p. 30.
4. "Recordings Help Voice of America Penetrate Russian Jam Session." *Audio Record*, Published by Audio Devices, Inc., 444 Madison Avenue, NYC, June-July, 1949. (A subscription to this pamphlet may be had for the asking.)
5. "A description of the explosion of the fourth atomic bomb. Able Day—Monday, July 1, 1946." David Bradley, *No Place to Hide*. New York: Bantam Books, 1949, p. 43.
6. See No. 4, ARGUMENTATIVE EXPOSITION.

SCIENCE

1. Pictures of Flying Wings being refitted with jet engines. *Life*, December 13, 1948, p. 43.
2. Diagram of a modern house showing the gradual change that is coming about in home design. *House Beautiful*, February, 1949, pp. 56-7.
3. Pictures and specifications of MG Midget automobile. *Life*, January 10, 1949, p. 63.
4. "There was no shock of any kind; the bridge had no impetus except from its own weight. It lurched neither to right nor left, but sank almost in a vertical line, snapping and breaking and tearing as it went, because no integral part could bear for an instant the enormous strain loosed upon it." Willa Cather, *Alexander's Bridge*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937, p. 122, all of the last paragraph.
5. Picture showing progress of man's attempt to conquer space. *Life*, January 17, 1949, p. 69.
6. "A New Wafer-thin Lens." *Life*, February 14, 1949, p. 81.
7. "Smallest Measuring Stick," a picture taken by the electron microscope, and explanatory article. *Time*, July 18, 1949, p. 53.
8. See No. 4, the section THE NEWS—NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL.
9. "I have often wondered how you addressed the English royal family..." *McCall's*, September, 1949, p. 28, Question No. 1, Eleanor Roosevelt's column "If You Ask Me."

THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

1. Picture of Beethoven—lonely, walking with his head bowed, plus whatever textual material the student may feel it necessary to read. Hendrick van Loon, *The Story of the Arts*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1937, plate opposite p. 512.
2. The aged pictures that adorn the dark corridors of Lincoln Hall, University of Illinois.
3. Jack Benny's technique of being the butt of the jokes. Any Jack Benny show.
4. The dagger scene in the Orson Welles screen version of *Macbeth*.
5. See No. 1, CAMPUS.
6. See No. 1, COMPARISON AND CONTRAST.

FARMING

1. A map showing annual rainfall in the United States. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 1, p. 406.
2. "If . . . by furnishing extra food and nesting facilities, we can attract about our homes more birds than the land normally supports, and there maintain them, they will form a very effective check on both weeds and insects." Edward Howe Forbush, *Useful Birds and Their Protection*. Boston: Mass. State Board of Agriculture, 1913, pp. 372 and first 6 lines of p. 374.
3. "Many trees literally are smothered or starved to death." The article "How to Care for Tree Roots." *Sunset*, August, 1949, p. 76.
4. "What's the future of surface irrigation in the midwest?" The article "Surface Irrigation Moves into the Midwest," *Prairie Farmer*, August 6, 1949.
5. "The average forest land owner of southern Illinois can more than double the growth and value of his woodland by favoring certain kinds of trees and gradually eliminating other kinds." *Prairie Farmer* (Illinois ed.), August 20, 1949, p. 32.

RELIGION

1. "Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practices. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of good will carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation." Graham Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*. New York: Viking Press, 1948, p. 61, last five sentences.
2. "The church was utterly black except for the red spark of the sanctuary lamp before the high altar. Taking her hand, and holding the candle before him, he led her across the choir to the Lady Chapel. . . ." Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1938, the whole chapter "December Night," beginning on page 245.

3. Short article describing the origin of the *Book of Mormon*. The article occurs on an unnumbered page preceding the text of the *Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1920.
4. "Suppose we took the next four and twenty years of Tom Sawyer's life, and gave a little joggle to the circumstances that controlled him. He would, logically and according to the joggle, turn out a rip or an angel." Rudyard Kipling quoting Mark Twain, *A Kipling Pageant*. Garden City: Halcyon House, 1942, p. 404, middle of the page, to p. 406, l. 6.
5. "Paul . . . had his ideas of the entire created scheme of things." Chester Warren Quimby, *Paul for Everyone*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947, Chapter 7.
6. See No. 6, PERSONAL REACTIONS.

CAMPUS

1. "To thy happy children of the future, those of the past send greetings." The *Alma Mater* statue, University of Illinois Campus.
2. A discussion of fraternities. Burges Johnson, "Campus versus Classroom." New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1946, p. 60, l. 16 to p. 66, l. 10.
3. A pep rally before a football game.
4. "The Color Line in Fraternities." An article by A. S. Romer, *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1947, p. 27.
5. "The teacher takes this wrench and shows me. You know where you stand in that kind of class. You learn something." The article "I Go to Trade School." *Ladies' Home Journal*, September, 1949, p. 48.

THREE REMINDERS

1. Be on the alert for good writing by your students—either poetry or prose. Send anything good to the editor for inclusion in next year's "Best Poetry" and "Best Prose." Be sure to include the student's name, class, and school, and the teacher's name. Send some this spring and more next fall.
2. The *Bulletin* can use numerous articles, both long and short, concerning your experiences and experiments in the teaching of English. Why not share your ideas, your techniques, and your bibliographies with others?
3. Renew now for 1950-51. Use the form on the back cover.

The Teaching of American Ideals—V

A STUDY OF PERSONAL PROBLEMS

By HAZEL ANDERSON

Galesburg Senior High School

Three junior classes, with a combined enrollment of 112, participated in this study. They were "regular" classes and were not hand-picked for the experiment. Their I.Q.'s ranged from 69 to 140.

At the beginning of the semester the class decided that they wished to increase their understanding of democratic ideals. But, being a practical-minded group, they wished to know also how these ideals affected them in their everyday living.

To begin with, the class, under the leadership of a student chairman, listed a number of topics which they would like to know more about. Some of the topics were much too large and vague, as the students themselves soon realized. Here is their original list:

1. Educational changes
2. Communism; Russia
3. Vocations; college; job opportunities
4. Economic conditions of the world
5. Social problems: crime, alcoholism, prisons, housing, welfare
6. Tolerance: religious, racial, class
7. United Nations
8. Personal problems: social life, dating, dancing, appearance, home study, study habits, sex
9. Living today

After considerable discussion, the class voted to concentrate upon the eighth topic, personal problems, although they saw that some of the other topics rightly belonged under this one. Each

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the last in a series on the teaching of American ideals. Other articles and a bibliography have appeared in the November, December, March, and April issues. Extra copies of all of these issues are still available.

student listed anonymously his own individual problems upon which he hoped that class study might shed some light. On the basis of these problems, the following topics were chosen for study:

1. Living today
2. How to study
3. Sex
4. Dating
5. Developing relationships with others
6. Vocations

The manner of attack upon each problem was worked out by each class with a student chairman. Objectives were established and procedures planned by the class. The teacher served as a "resource aid" who could suggest pertinent materials that might be unknown to most members of the class.

The problem "Living Today" was worked out with Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town* as the base. The class pointed out the similarities and the contrasts between life in Grover's Corners in 1901-1913 and life in Galesburg in 1949. They saw that although superficially our lives are different, in essence they are the same: the daily rising and setting of the sun; the constant procession of birth, marriage, and death; "the yelling and screaming from those schoolyards"; the doctor who in a double sense "cares for" the sick; the paper boy and the milkman; the boy interested in sports; the town drunk and the town gossip; the problems of home adjustment. They learned that even the coming of the Atomic Age has not altered the basic qualities of our lives, and that from the solutions reached by other people in other years we can be guided toward solutions of our own problems.

Activities in writing, speaking, and listening were incorporated in this study, as in each of the other units.

In the unit on "How to Study," the class used as basic references Carol Hovious' *Flying the Printways*, Crawford and Woodward's *Better Ways of Growing Up*, Wright's *Managing Yourself*, and Bliss' *Personality and School*. The class prepared and answered the following questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDY HABITS

Do you	Always	Generally	Some of the time	Seldom	Never
Understand the assignment?					
Keep an assignment book?					
Budget your study time?					
Have a definite time and place to study?					
Study in a quiet place?					
Start work immediately?					
Hand work in on time?					
Take work home regularly?					
Make study outlines?					
Make every class minute count?					
Review regularly at frequent intervals?					
Avoid cramming?					
Rely on own ability to get lessons?					
Consult the teacher regularly?					
Recite to someone?					
Distinguish kinds of reading, skimming, intensive, pleasure?					
Strive to improve?					
Read an assignment more than once?					
Have necessary supplies?					
Participate in class discussion?					
Prepare more than the minimum?					
Make up work missed by absence?					
Take notes in class?					

The other problems were approached in a similar manner. I have complete outlines of each problem and a bibliography of readings for students. Anyone who is interested may have them.

Students' evaluations showed that they liked the course—liked it well enough that we plan to continue it. The feeling of being a part of the school developed in the most timid. All expressed and discussed their ideas. The unity of each class was unusual. One group voted to meet once a year for five years, and each student is to give an oral autobiography covering the years since 1949.

FROM THE EDITOR'S THOUGHTBOOK

For all except the aged, and even for many of them, life is a becoming and not a being. Yesterday we were becoming today, and today is our embryonic tomorrow. Our moment is not now but that which will be. And when it comes it will not be, but will be become as the wheel turns.

Joy is in the becoming. Courtship is sweeter than marriage. The game lives longer than victory. Goals fade with attainment.

Children are becoming. Let them become. Do not insist that they be. Let them enjoy their becoming. Help them to become. Becoming is growth toward a greater becoming.

* * *

The room was huge. All the teachers of English in the whole world were there. They listened to the trivialities and applauded. They listened to the alarms and applauded. They listened to the witticisms and applauded.

A little old man began speaking.

"Respect your work," he pleaded. "If you understand it, you must respect it. It is big. It is good. You are interpreters, liaison officers. Through you, A can comprehend B, and Z can comprehend A. Your work is bigger than apostrophes, bigger than literary facts and fancies, bigger than a classroom. You build boats, so that K can visit N and R and D. Building boats is big work. It is good work. It demands respect."

The teachers of English sat silent. They did not understand the little old man. They waited for the next speaker. His subject was "The Elimination of Common Spelling Errors."

* * *

Conceive of humanity as a huge, shapeless mass floating in a sea of air.

Conceive further of a large number of human beings at the lower edge of the mass. They are fluttering, pulling downward, down toward the depths from which the mass has moved, down toward paganism, down toward bestiality, backward and downward, down toward oblivion.

Conceive then of another large group of human beings, at the upper edge of the mass. They too are fluttering, pulling, trying to move that which moves but inches in a thousand years. They are pulling upward, up toward a goal that they cannot define, up toward a light that they feel but cannot see, up toward a brilliance that only the Creator can understand fully.

Around and through the mass, but always necessarily of the mass, move they who are called Teachers. They offer sustenance and encouragement to those who are pulling upward or who may eventually be strong enough to pull upward. They try to turn those who are pulling downward, to change a pull down into a push up. And within the mass they try to point each individual in the right direction—up and ahead, not down and back.

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